

County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

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December 6, 2006

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Bryce Yokomizo, Director

SUBJECT: **REPORT: SANCTIONED PARTICIPANTS AND THE CHALLENGE OF
MEETING WELFARE-TO-WORK REQUIREMENTS IN THE ERA OF TANF
REAUTHORIZATION**

Attached is the second of a two-part report, "Sanctioned Participants and the Challenge of Meeting Welfare-to-Work Requirements in the Era of TANF Reauthorization," prepared by the Service Integration Branch of the Chief Administrative Office (CAO-SIB). This report culminates the process initiated in 2003 when the Commission for Public Social Services informed the Board of the need for systematic information on welfare sanctions and the sanctioned participants in the County of Los Angeles.

In light of TANF reauthorization and the increased welfare-to-work participation rate expectation facing DPSS, this report is significant because it provides insights into reasons participants remain sanctioned for six months and longer. It will be of valuable assistance as part of our strategy to reduce sanctions and increase participation.

The first report released in April 2005, "Study of Sanctions Among CalWORKs Participants in the County of Los Angeles: Who, When and Why?", identified the County's sanctioned population and analyzed the sanction rates during the period of April 2002 to February 2004.

The second report covers the period from the start of 2004 to the start of 2006 and examines participants' perspective on sanctions.

Key findings in the second report are presented in the following two areas:

1. Recent Dynamics in Sanctions and Compliance

- ❖ While the County's quarterly number of sanctions declined between the start of 2004 and the end of 2005, the monthly sanction rate continued to increase between February 2004 and the summer of 2005. This increasing sanction rate was not a function of more frequent noncompliance but instead partly an effect of a decline in new welfare entrants.
- ❖ Between January 2004 and the start of 2006, average sanction durations increased from 11 months to 16 months.

- ❖ While the proportion of Welfare-to-Work participants who became sanctioned for the first time dropped from 14 percent to 9 percent between April 2004 and February 2006, the proportion of the sanctioned population in any given month that was sanctioned more than once increased from 34 to 48 percent between the start of 2004 and the end of 2005.

2. Explaining Chronic Sanctions

- ❖ Chronically sanctioned participants tend to have more educational deficits than never sanctioned and short-term sanctioned participants.
- ❖ Chronically sanctioned participants have disproportionately poor work experience.
- ❖ Chronically sanctioned participants tend to work in relatively unstable, low-skill, low-paying jobs.
- ❖ Analysis of administrative data revealed that episodes of homelessness and housing instability were observed in higher proportions among chronically sanctioned participants.
- ❖ Survey results additionally indicated that transportation problems prevented a significantly higher proportion of chronically sanctioned participants from working when compared to never sanctioned participants.
- ❖ Data show that participants coming from larger households are more likely to become chronically sanctioned.
- ❖ Survey results indicate that 40 percent of the chronically sanctioned respondents either did not know why they were sanctioned or if they were sanctioned.
- ❖ Focus group findings further suggest that many sanctions may be related to communication problems, such as lack of notification and knowledge about the program and inconsistent guidance for accessing knowledge about the requirements and services.

Soon after the first report on sanctioned CalWORKs participants was released in April 2005, the Department formed an external workgroup of CalWORKs stakeholders and developed the Sanction Action Plan, made up of 43 recommendations for reducing sanctions, which we shared with your Board in August 2005. Based on the success of that approach and the resulting Department actions which have reduced sanctioned cases by 22% in the last year, we intend to take a similar approach with Part II, and will report to your Board semi-annually on the Department's continued progress in reducing sanctions.

BY:bw

Attachment

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors